

TURN YOUR CUSTOMERS INTO COLLECTORS

by Stephanie Bond

Women love to collect—coffee mugs, dolls, crystal animals, shoes, you name it! The act of accumulating a set of objects we adore is irresistible. When you combine the love of romance reading with the insatiable urge to collect, you have a winning combination! Here are a few facts to help sell your customers on the idea of collecting romance novels:

Collecting romance novels is easy! No experience necessary—anyone with access to a bookstore or a computer can get started. Just bring your love for reading and a desire to learn more about the wonderful world of romance novels.

Collecting romance novels is fun! Collectors have developed a huge on-line community, complete with chat-rooms, conferences, and organized book-swaps. Use a search engine to identify sites and groups dedicated to romance book collecting to educate yourself about the nuances of collectible editions.

Collecting romance novels is unique! With so many authors, sub-genres, lines, and subjects to choose from, everyone will be able to tap into her own special interest. A romance novel collection can be as individual as the collector, and speak volumes about her personality.

Collecting romance novels is affordable! Since most are paperbacks, prices are very reasonable, most in the \$5-\$10 range. Even rare volumes ring in at under \$50, and after you build your own collection, you'll find that most collectors are willing to trade for something on your shelf.

Collecting romance novels is manageable! You won't need fancy display cases or a lot of space—simply store books in a dry location away from direct light. A colorful bookshelf is beautiful *and* compact.

Getting started. Help your customers identify what about romance novels they find most fascinating. For example, collections have been built on:

The covers—a particular artist (Pino), cover model (John D'Salvo), type of cover (step-back), etc.

The authors—researching an author and her various pseudonyms can be challenging and exciting.

(continued)

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The setting—Regency England, Scottish historicals, romances set in Texas, etc.

First printing date—romances printed in the 70's, 80's, etc.

The subject—amnesia, marriages of convenience, mail-order brides, World War II, etc.

The sub-genre—paranormal, comedy, romantic suspense, futuristic, inspirational, multicultural, etc.

The line—Harlequin Temptation, Silhouette Intimate Moments, or a defunct line such as Bantam Loveswept, etc.

The mini-series—families, homesteads, towns, companies, and legends are just some of the themes for series.

The format—hardcover, bookclub edition, anthologies, reprints, large print, audio, etc.

The language—international editions are true conversation pieces.

Serious collectors will want to become more educated on the 'grades' of romance novels (briefly: A—near-mint condition; B—slightly creased, perhaps a light bookstore stamp inside; C—moderately creased, stamped; D—heavily creased, stamped; F—damaged, torn) and how the condition affects the value. And while value is one aspect of collecting, the basic rule of any type of collecting applies here: buy what you like, and you'll never be disappointed.

There's so much to explore in the archives of romance publishing, and the face of romance is changing constantly. To foster the love of collecting old and new romance novels among your customers, consider sponsoring a series of workshops and discussions at your store, and offering a place for a group to meet each week. Romance begets romance, and collectors beget sales! ~\$Bond

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