3. Adding Data to SPMC's ODP

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In the two prior editions of *Paper Money*, I introduced the Society's Obsoletes Database Project (ODP) and explained how to use it. Hopefully, over the last couple of months you've had an opportunity to take a better look at our website (www.spmc.org\obs). We've hit some new milestones, as we now have nearly 5,000 notes posted.

ODP is designed for active participation by all SPMC members. Even if you don't have a single note to post, you can still add to our body of knowledge; all you need are eyes and fingers, and a desire to help our worthy mission.

I always like to start with some background information to help paint the big picture, and then connect the dots to bring it all home. The first thing we'll hit upon in this discussion is the concept of roles. For the ODP website, there are three primary roles than can be assigned to each user who logs in. The roles are end-user, State Expert (SE) and administrator. Each of these has different permissions of what they can do on the website. Most SPMC members will be end-users by default, but even that role enables you as a member to access nearly all corners of the website; non-members can't get past the home page.

State Experts have the ability to vet and correct any of the information that has been posted within their designated space, that is, their declared states of interest. State Experts are listed on our FAQ page. Finally, those with the administrator role (just a few of us) have the keys to whole system. The thing to remember throughout is that 1) you really can't break anything, so be bold and try out ODP to its full extent, and 2) if you ever can't do anything or need help, use the forum, or find someone at the next higher role to answer your questions. There is always an answer.

Okay, you have some obsoletes you'd like to add to our database. How do you do it? The first thing to do is to scan them into JPG files. A resolution of 300dpi to 600dpi is fine. Lower resolution may be acceptable, but that inhibits end-users from viewing note detail. Higher resolution means larger files and longer download times. Like many things in life, balance is the key.

You should next check the status of your state(s) in the FAQ section (see the FAQ link in the menu bar). If a state status is listed as "stable," it is more or less ready for you to add your notes. The issuers are generally complete, as well as the designs of notes. Go ahead and enter your notes as described below. States that are not listed as stable are currently works in progress. We either have SEs working on building the lists of issuers and designs, or no SEs at all. In this case, we could definitely use your assistance in building these lists. Please contact me at shawn@shawnhewitt.com so that we can make the most of your contribution.

If your state is stable and you have your images, the answer of how to upload depends primarily on how many you have and how you have tracked them in the past. We've built in several options for uploading images and data. Following is the rough breakdown. See which one best describes your situation, and then refer to that section:

1) I have about 50 notes or fewer
    a. I know what I have. *See "+Note – Manual Entry"*
    b. Not sure what I have. *See "+Note – Ask for Identification"*
2) I have more than 50 notes
    a. I have my collection cataloged in a spreadsheet. *See "Spreadsheet"*
    b. I have not cataloged my collection, but know what I have.
        i. I have time to create a spreadsheet. See *"Spreadsheet"*
        ii. I don't have time to create a spreadsheet. *See "+Note Gallery"*
    c. Not sure what I have. *See "+ Note Gallery"*

+Note – Manual Entry

This is the quick and easy method for uploading small numbers of images to ODP. The link, labeled "+Note", is found just to the right of the search bar on the home page. Clicking the link will kick off what we call the Wizard, which is a four-step process to gather your information.

- **Images:** Step 1 asks you upload your front image and back one if you have it. Click Browse to select the image from your drive, and Upload to complete the process. You can optionally provide credit for your source of the picture – either yourself (if you scanned it) or someone else as appropriate. We always encourage giving credit where credit is due. Once you are finished with uploading, click "Add More Details" to proceed.
- **Issuer:** In step 2 you are prompted for basic information about the issuer. All of this, in most cases, should be plainly visible by simply reading it off the note. Start by selecting the state from the pull-down menu, then the city. When you go the pull-down to select the issuer, only those issuers known from that location are listed. If your state is identified as stable in the FAQ, there is a very good chance that your issuer will be there. Go ahead and select it, and then click "Use Selected Issuer" at the bottom of the panel. If you have an unreported issuer, you can click "Suggest New Issuer" to create a new entry.
- **Design:** Step 3 is about selecting the appropriate design. Because most designs are unique to the denomination, we start by selecting the denomination from the pull-down list. That will filter the design options and present only those that are relevant. Click the radio button next to the appropriate description – it will expand to show more details so you can be certain of your selection. Conclude this step by clicking "Continue" at the bottom. Again, if the option available does not match the note, you have the opportunity to add one using the "Suggest New Design" link to the right.
- **Note:** The final step guides you through entering information that is specific to your note. This section asks for a lot of details, but don't despair if you don't know the answers. Just do the best you can, and later we can work on fixing the entry if necessary. In addition to selecting the format (proof, issued, remainder), serial number, date and grade, you can optionally add signatures and provenance data. If this is one of many highly similar notes (e.g., a hoard of remainders) you can adjust the census count from 1 to an appropriate number. This will automatically change the rarity rating based on your estimate of the number of notes known. You can also add comments and credits as you see fit. When you're done, click the box at the bottom to certify your entry and click "Submit Note for Approval".

Once you've gone through all the steps, you won't see your note listed among the other entries until one of our SEs has reviewed your information and officially approved it for publication. It will them be identified as published and visible to all users.

+Note – Ask for Identification

This method is the same as the previous section, but after any of the steps you can click "Request for Identification". Doing so will put your entry into the Unidentified Notes section of the website (see below for more about this), where others can review the entry and update as appropriate.

+Note Gallery

This is the best option if you have a large collection of images, but have not compiled a spreadsheet of what you have. Essentially, the idea is to crowd source knowledge to gather data surrounding the notes. From the top menu bar, click on "Note Galleries" to examine the existing galleries. You'll see several that have been set up. Click on the title of any one of them to drill inside and view a matrix of images that typically fits a theme, like what Bill Gunther has done with his "Alabama State Notes" gallery. He used this method to upload his Alabama collection.

To create a new gallery, go back to the home page and click "+Note Gallery". You're prompted for a gallery title, and the first image. After the first image has been uploaded, look for "Add a new file" just below it to add more. The credits field will populate the entire list with the same source, but that can be edited individually later as needed. Finally, you can entire a description if you wish to tell a story about your gallery. Hit "Save" to complete the creation of your gallery. You can later click on the "Edit" tab when viewing the gallery to make further changes or add notes to it.

Notice that in your newly created gallery there is a blue button labeled "Create a Note" under each of the images. This is where you or anyone can apply their knowledge and build data around the note, as clicking the link kicks off the Wizard, just like we saw in the previous section, but with the image already entered as part of step 1. You just continue with steps 2, 3 and 4. Completing step 4 will route the note for approval by the appropriate SE, and when finished, the blue button will change to a white one labeled "View Note".

Spreadsheet

For those who have large collections and are very organized, we want to take advantage of all the work you've done so far. More than likely, you have the data about your notes in an Excel spreadsheet or similar database. Our spreadsheets will have some more columns than yours, but importing your data will definitely save some work. We've found that every situation is somewhat unique, so start by contacting me and we can take it from there.

Unidentified Notes

The thing that makes this project so challenging is that obsoletes are non-standard in nature. The broad definition of them goes way beyond state bank notes, to include all kinds of private issues. In some cases, when you look at an obsolete note, it is not even clear who is the issuer. To help account for mavericks (unidentified issuers) and just plain unusual notes, we've created a system that allows others to chime in, so to speak, to catalog those strange ones.

On the top menu bar there is a link to the “Unidentified Notes” page. Whenever someone has gone through the Wizard and clicked on the “Request for Information” button, the note entry will end up here. Anyone can propose a description of the notes in question, and anyone can cast a vote in favor of one of the already-present descriptions. It’s not a democracy, however, as the number of votes does not decide the winner. After a period of time, the SE(s) in charge will render a decision on the most accurate description.

What’s Next

This article summarizes the ways in which you can add information about the notes in your collection to SPMC’s Obsoletes Database Project. We have many contributors so far, but many more are needed to make the database as meaningful as possible. In our next installment, we’ll cover what I think is perhaps the best feature of ODP, the Set Registry. This functionality allows users to essentially store their collections virtually, track them in multiple ways, share with others, and potentially compete with other collectors for best-of-category awards to be presented at the next International Paper Money Show. You’ll want to stay tuned for this riveting finale of our series in our next edition of *Paper Money*.