# THE LIMAYE INVENTORY SPREADSHEET FOR

# BIG BLUE COLLECTORS

***Provided by Dilip Limaye***

## Rationale and Genesis

Many collectors of the stamps in Scott International Volume I, earlier known as the Junior Album and now also known as the “Big Blue,”[[1]](#footnote-1) have wondered about the degree of completeness of their collections. And while catalog values of stamps are not very meaningful, some stamp collectors (like me) are interested in the total catalog value of their collections. I started collecting the stamps in the Big Blue (BB) with the purchase of a collection in 1987 that was about 35-40% filled. Over the next 15 years I obtained stamps at stamp shows and auctions to fill up my BB album (vintage 1943).

By the turn of the century I believed that I had filled about 80-85% of the spaces in my 1943 album (which is in four binders) and was intrigued about determining the degree of completion (as a % of the total spaces in the album) and the total catalog value (CV) of my collection. My first attempt at doing this was rather simplistic and very inefficient - I marked up the stamps in my album in the 2001 Scott Classic Specialized catalog and counted the number and CV for each country using a calculator – a very cumbersome and tiring process that was subject to many errors.

Over the succeeding 15 years I have managed to complete my collection, getting the last “holdout” (the elusive Syria 106c) earlier this year and now have a 100% complete 1943 album.

Late last year I started a cataloging of my collection in a large Excel spreadsheet. That spreadsheet allows me to enter the spaces on each page and enter whether I have an unused or used stamp in each album space. I have also started entering the CVs of each of my stamps using the 2017 Scott Classic Specialized catalog (so it will allow me to answer an interesting question – how much has the CV increased from 2001 to 2017?). This is a massive undertaking as BB contains over 33,000 stamp spaces, and it will most likely take me a long time to complete.

I discussed my “project” with Jim Jackson, who commented that such a spreadsheet could be valuable to many BB collectors. So I started a new project to develop a modified version of my spreadsheet that would allow any collector to enter information on his/her collection and assess the % completion, cost and CV of the collection by country.

The creation of this spreadsheet is based on and has benefited substantially from the work of Jim Jackson whose blog (see footnote below) documents the spaces contained in the BB album for each country inn the form of “Big Blue Checklists”. That was an amazing accomplishment and I wonder how many man-years of effort he devoted to completing this documentation. If Jim’s Checklists had not been available, it is likely that I would not have undertaken this project.

## The Inventory Spreadsheet

The Limaye Inventory spreadsheet contains 26 tabs or sheets, the first 25 containing the countries starting with one of the letters of the alphabet (“A” to “Z” excluding “X” as there are no countries starting with the letter X), plus a “Totals” sheet that sums up all the countries. Each of the spreadsheets corresponding to tabs “A” to “Z” are also provided separately so collectors have the option of working with the entire spreadsheet or working with individual spreadsheets corresponding to the sets of countries starting with the letters A through Z.

The complete spreadsheet has spaces for 33,897 stamps!

The spreadsheet is based on the 1969/1997 BB albums. Where there are differences among these, they are noted in the comments sections.

The spreadsheets contain the following columns:

* Column A – Left blank – not used.
* Column B (Year) – Shows the year of issue (as represented in the album, may be sometimes different from the catalog))
* Column C (Album Space, Scott No.) – Provides the Scott catalog number for the space in the album. It should be noted that many of the spaces provide a picture or description that may apply to several different stamps. In such spaces, the spreadsheet provides the options (based on Jim Jackson’s blog) that would fit that space. Also, the BB contains many blank spaces. In such spaces, the spreadsheet enters the word “Blank” and provides suggestions in column D regarding which stamp(s) may be placed in that space. These suggestions are based on Jim’s blog referred to above, and a collector may have a different stamp in that space.
* Column D (Notes) – Provides guidance regarding the type of stamp (such as Semi Postal, Air Post, etc.). This column also provides suggestions for the stamps that could be placed in the “Blank” spaces. These suggestions are based on Jim’s Blog.
* Column E (My Collection, Scott No.) – is designated for the collector to enter the Scott catalog number for the stamp in that space in his/her collection.
* Columns F and G (My Collection, Scott No.) – Allow the user to enter the number of mint and used stamps the collection with that Scott No.
* Columns H and I (My Cost, Mint and Used) – these columns are provided for the collector to insert the costs of acquiring the stamps.
* Column J (My Cost, Total) – Adds the amounts in Columns H and I to provide the total cost of stamps in that space. The formula is embedded in the sheet so that the totals are automatically calculated.
* Column K and L (My Cat Value, Mint and Used) – Allow the user to insert the CV of the stamps in that space.
* Column M (My Cat Value, Total) - Adds the amounts in Columns K and L to provide the total CV of stamps in that space. The formula is embedded in the sheet so that the totals are automatically calculated.
* Column N (Comments) – Allows the user to provide comments related to his/her collection

The spreadsheet is organized by country in alphabetic order (which may not necessarily be the order in which the countries appear in your album, but I felt that organizing in the alphabetic order facilitates the use of the Scott Classic Catalog).

For each country, the spreadsheet has formulas that provide at the bottom:

* Total number of spaces filled for the country
* Total numbers of mint and used stamps for the country
* Total costs of mint, used and total costs for stamps of the country
* Total cat value of mint, used and total stamps of the country
* Percent completion (number of filled spaces divided by number of spaces in the album)

Near the bottom of the spreadsheet, I have created a table (“Summary of Countries”) that adds all the countries in this tab to provide country totals and percent complete for the group of countries.

The final tab “Totals” automatically copies the Summary tables from each of the “A” to “Z” tabs to provide the totals for the entire collection. The formulas are embedded in the sheet so that the totals are automatically calculated.

## User Guide

### Main Table by Country

For each country in Tabs a through Z:

* The entries in Columns B, C and D are provided in the spreadsheet based on the 1969/1997 BB. These should not be changed unless the BB album spaces in your edition are different from the 1969/1997 BB.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* In Column E, enter the Scott catalog number of the stamp you have in that space.
* In Columns F and G, enter the number of mint and used stamps you have corresponding to the Scott number you have provided in Column E. (in other words, if you have a mint stamp, place a 1 in the cell in Column F; if you have a used stamp, place a 1 in Column G; if you have both, place a 1 in each column; if you have two used stamps, place a 2 in Column G, etc.)
* In Columns H and I, enter your cost of acquiring the stamps you have listed in Columns F and G, separately for the mint and used stamps. For example, if you acquired two mint stamps each at a cost of $5.00, enter $10.00.
* Column J will automatically provide the total cost by summing the amounts in Columns H and I.
* In Columns K and L, enter the catalog values of the stamps you have entered in Columns F and G, separately for the mint and used stamps. For example, if the CV of the mint stamp is $12.00 and you have two mint stamps, then enter the value as $24.00.
* Column M will automatically provide the total cost by summing the amounts in Columns K and L.
* Column N is provided for you to make any comments regarding the stamp in that row. Examples may be “never hinged”, “stamp is damaged”, “my stamp is different from the suggested options”, “not sure of Scott No.” etc.

For each country, two rows are provided at the end of that country’s listing of the spaces. These are automatically generated (formulas are embedded and no user input is required). The first row shows the totals of:

* Number of album spaces
* Number of spaces filled
* Numbers of mint and used stamps and the total of these
* The total costs you have entered (mint, used and total)
* The total CV of your stamps (mint, used and total)

The second row shows the % complete (the ratio of filled spaces to the total spaces in your album). Note that the number of spaces filled (in Column E of this row) is NOT the total of mint and used stamps in your collection. This is because you may have more than one stamp for some of the spaces (such as both mint and used) but that should be counted as only one filled space for the purpose of determining the % completion.

### Summary Table Showing All Countries

At the end of each country, a table (titled *“Summary of Countries - Total Number of Stamps and Catalog Values by Country”*) is automatically generated showing the totals for Columns F through M. This table will show for each country

* number of BB spaces
* country name
* number of filled spaces
* number of mint and used stamps
* total costs of the stamps (mint, used and total)
* total catalog values (mint, used and total). No user inputs are required for this Table

It will also provide the totals for all the countries in the sheet and the % completion.

### Table for Additional Stamps

Since you, like almost all BB collectors, are likely to have additional stamps that do not fit the spaces in the BB, I have provided another table at the end of each tab. This Table (titled *“Additional Stamps in My Collection”*) allows you to enter additional stamps - in the columns provided.

As in the case of the main table, formulas are included for the totals columns.

## Totals Table

The final tab is the Totals table which copies the information from the individual tabs to provide the totals for the entire collection.

## Notes and Comments

Filling out the spreadsheet may present some challenges. In my opinion, the most difficult part would be completing the My Cost columns. I have not kept the records of all my purchases, and many of these were in lots rather than single stamps. My original purchase was a collection in four binders that had over 10,000 stamps (At that time I did not count them nor checked to see if they were the correct stamps for the specific spaces – I have done so lately to confirm that the “correct” stamps are in all spaces. But how would I allocate the cost of that purchase to individual countries or individual spaces?)

Since it is likely that you have also purchased collections to fill up your album, you will face the same problem. One option may be to enter the total cost of acquiring the stamps for a country when you purchase a country-specific lot, and entering that in the bottom row where the total costs are shown. The you can add to the costs as you obtain additional stamps and update the totals. If anyone has suggested solutions, please let me know by commenting on this Blog.

Another challenge is entering the Scott CV for each stamp. This is not a difficult task but is quite tedious. It would be nice if Scott provided the CVs in an electronic database format. But in the absence of that, you need to manually enter the CVs.

As you can imagine, it has taken a long time to create these spreadsheets. Jim and I have conducted a lot of checking to assure that the information provided is accurate, but it is likely that, with a massive undertaking like this, there are bound to be some errors and omissions. I would appreciate your pointing out any errors (or ambiguities) so they can be fixed in future versions. I would also welcome any comments and suggestions on the spreadsheet content, format, appearance, or anything else.

There are no “locked” cells in the spreadsheet so you can make changes as you wish, and add or delete columns, rows or formulas. And you can add any comments for specific countries or spaces. I am requesting, however, that if you make changes that you believe are improvements and/or can be useful to other collectors, please let me know through the “Comments” section of this Blog.

In any case, I would welcome your comments on your experience in using this spreadsheet.

1. The term Big Blue was coined Jim Jackson, whose pioneering and very extensive studies of the BB albums have resulted in his blog <http://bigblue1840-1940.blogspot.in> which identifies all the spaces in the Big Blue and even provides information on the differences between the early versions of the BB (from the 1940s) and the more recent versions (1969 and 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This may happen if the user has an older version of the BB (such as from the 1940s). In cataloging my 1943 album, I have found many significant differences from the 1969/1997 versions. I am documenting these in the process of cataloging my 1943 collection and may provide them on this blog at a later date. The reason for using the 1969/1997 version for this spreadsheet is my belief that there are more collectors with the newer versions than the older versions. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)