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ELEVATING THE STAMP COLLECTING EXPERIENCE THROUGH DIGITAL STAMP ALBUM

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ABSTRACT

Philately, commonly known as stamp collecting, is a globally embraced and culturally rich hobby with historical significance. This study delves into the transformative influence of StampAlbumCollect, a web-based personalised stamp album application, on the traditional practice of stamp collecting. Departing from conventional reliance on physical albums, collectors now grapple with opportunities and challenges introduced by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the digital era. StampAlbumCollect, a user-friendly platform harnessing ICT advancements, redefines how collectors engage with stamp collections, offering a seamless experience regardless of location. Beyond organisational advantages, StampAlbumCollect becomes a dynamic hub for knowledge sharing among collectors, acting as a catalyst for community-building in this time-honoured hobby. The study follows an iterative model, collaborating with stamp collectors and analysing existing stamp collection websites to develop StampAlbumCollect's requirements meticulously. This iterative approach ensures adaptability, responsiveness, and continuous improvement based on user feedback, maintaining dynamic alignment with user needs. Feedback from respondents on StampAlbumCollect overwhelmingly reflects positive perceptions concerning practical experience, usability, usefulness, ease of learning, and overall satisfaction. The application receives notable acclaim for its ease of use, user-friendliness, and efficiency. While a few instances of neutrality are present, the predominant sentiment is positive, affirming StampAlbumCollect's success and providing insights for potential enhancements. Future enhancements for StampAlbumCollect may encompass expanded customisation tools, advanced data analytics for user behaviour insights, and the creation of a dedicated mobile application. These advancements further enhance user satisfaction, ensuring StampAlbumCollect's ongoing success and valuable contribution to the evolving landscape of digital stamp collecting.

Keywords: Digital Stamp Album, Philately, Stamp Album, Stamp Collecting.

INTRODUCTION

Stamp collecting, also known as philately, is a historic and culturally rich hobby embraced by a passionate global community (Telly, 2013). In this context, a stamp refers to a small piece of paper issued by a government postal authority that is affixed to an item of mail to indicate the postage payment. These miniature masterpieces hold aesthetic appeal and serve as gateways to exploring different countries' historical, cultural, and artistic nuances (Libera, 2020; Brennan, 2018). Individuals who engage in this hobby are known as stamp collectors. Notably, stamp collecting has the potential to serve as a source of income (Satchell & Auld, 2009). Interestingly, an early study by Ball (1986) intriguingly suggests that stamps can also act as a stimulus for gifted students.

Stamp collectors have traditionally relied on physical stamp albums and catalogues to organise and delve into the stories behind their collections. However, the digital age, characterised by advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), has introduced challenges and transformative opportunities to this cherished pastime (Hirwade & Nawlakhe, 2012). Recognised as a valuable asset across different sectors such as education (Jan et al., 2019) and marketing (Yamin et al., 2021), ICT, particularly when combined with Internet technology, enables the establishment of digital repositories proficient in effortlessly storing and retrieving digital records, surpassing limitations related to time and location (Sakri & Ishak, 2023).

The existing efforts in digital stamp archiving have predominantly centred around specific objectives such as archival preservation, the dissemination of stamp-related information, and the establishment of online marketplaces for stamps. However, an area that has received relatively less attention in prior research is the development of systematic, self-curated, and personalised digital stamp albums. Unlike the broader focus on archiving and information sharing, this aspect delves into creating a more individualised and user-centric experience for stamp collectors. A systematic, self-curated, and personalised digital stamp album would empower collectors to organise, showcase, and customise their collections to align with their preferences and interests. This represents a departure from the conventional approaches and introduces a more tailored and user-focused dimension to the digital stamp collecting landscape, enhancing collectors' overall engagement and satisfaction in the digital age.

In response to this evolving landscape, this article introduces web-based personalised stamp album applications called StampAlbumCollect, which revolutionise how collectors interact with their treasured collections. These applications leverage the power of ICT to provide collectors with a user-friendly, efficient, and easily accessible platform for managing and showcasing their stamps. Unlike traditional physical albums, these digital counterparts transcend spatial constraints, offering collectors a virtual canvas to curate, explore, and reference their collections seamlessly, regardless of location, as long as they have an internet connection.

Beyond these organisational benefits, this digital tool also serves as a dynamic platform for knowledge sharing among stamp collectors. It facilitates the exchange of information, insights, and experiences, fostering a collaborative community where collectors can deepen their understanding of philately and expand their appreciation for the historical and cultural narratives embedded in their stamp collections.

Thus, the web-based personalised stamp album becomes a technological advancement and a catalyst for community-building and the shared enjoyment of this time-honoured hobby.

The following section explores existing digital platforms for stamp collectors, which serve as valuable references for this study. Next, the methodology is detailed, followed by a discussion on the design and implementation of StampAlbumCollect. The evaluation section then presents the findings from usability testing. Finally, the article is summarised in the conclusion section.

DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR STAMP COLLECTORS

The global stamp-collecting community has seen a surge in efforts to collect and archive stamps worldwide, facilitated by the emergence of online platforms offering valuable services to collectors. These platforms provide downloadable stamp albums, enabling convenient printing and systematic organisation based on designated slots within the album. For example, Stamp Albums Web (WESComp Systems, n.d) provides cost-effective U.S. and foreign stamp album pages. The platform boasts over 200,000 pages, featuring a continually expanding set of over 6,500 Classic Era pages. Another example is The Stamp Web (AlbumEasy, n.d), a platform for AlbumEasy, a free page layout software for DIY stamp albums.

Beyond serving as organisational tools, these online services also serve as comprehensive stamp collector reference centres. Collectors can use these platforms to verify the originality and authenticity of their stamps. Additionally, these resources offer guidance on where to purchase stamps, providing valuable insights into acquiring specific items to enhance their collections.

In addition to these archival and reference features, certain websites have evolved into dynamic marketplaces, acting as intermediaries for stamp sales and auctions. One such platform is Stampworld.com (StampWorld.com, n.d), the largest online stamp catalogue, providing an extensive worldwide stamp catalogue with features such as over 700,000 colour pictures, 750,000+ stamps, stamp forums, and options for private website registration. Another platform is EzStamp (EzStamp, 2025), offering a SCOTT™ licensed Stamp Collecting Software specifically designed for inventory management. This software includes features such as SCOTT, pricing based on market values, and vibrant colour images. Stanley Gibbons, the world's longest-established rare stamp merchant, offers the web-based tool Stanley Gibbons' My Collection (Stanley Gibbons, 2025) for managing, viewing, and valuing stamp collections. Users can systematically organise stamps using the acclaimed Stanley Gibbons Stamps of the World catalogue, providing additional details, personal descriptions, purchase prices, alternative catalogue numbers, and the option to upload images.

Expanding web platforms and mobile apps offer promising tools for stamp collectors. Manning et al. (2013) proposed a mobile application for the British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) involving virtual stamp collecting using image recognition software to identify stamps in the museum exhibit space. The app engages users with diverse content, making museum visits interactive, and is designed for personal mobile devices to enhance interactivity without detracting from the museum experience.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed an iterative model, a methodology rooted in the software development life cycle. This approach initiates with foundational requirements and progressively refines or enhances them as the project advances (Adel & Abdullah, 2015). This approach also provides flexibility in testing and addressing bugs during each iteration. The project encompasses five stages: planning, analysis and design, implementation, testing, and evaluation.

In the planning phase, the essential requirement for the application is identified and outlined. Collaborations with stamp collectors are initiated to gain an in-depth understanding of their needs. This involves extracting information directly from collectors, confirming their requirements, and understanding their expectations. A review is also conducted on existing stamp collection websites, such as Stanley Gibbons, to gather insights into tools for creating and managing stamp albums. Requirements for the personalised stamp album are thoroughly developed using information from collector interviews and research on existing websites.

The acquired requirements undergo meticulous examination during the analysis and design phase. This involves the preparation of the system design and design documentation. Use cases are created to depict user-application interactions in various scenarios, visually representing the users' roles and the functions they can perform. Additionally, sequence diagrams and activity diagrams are developed further to illustrate the workflow and functionality of the system.

All planned aspects, such as system design and design documentation, are translated into code in the implementation phase. Developers use PHP and Mysql to code based on the system design. PHP, a server scripting language, facilitates interaction with web pages, while Mysql is a relational database management system for data storage. The interfaces are designed based on the design document to ensure user functionality during testing. The testing within the iterative model is an ongoing and integral process, ensuring the early detection and resolution of issues, continuous refinement of the software, and alignment with user expectations. The iterative nature of the model allows for flexibility and responsiveness to changing requirements and feedback.

The evaluation phase acts as a bridge between the ongoing iteration and the planning of future cycles. Its primary purpose is maintaining the software development process's adaptability, responsiveness, and user-focused orientation. During this phase, users are actively engaged, invited to review the application, and encouraged to offer valuable feedback for continuous improvement. This iterative approach ensures that software development remains dynamic, aligns with user needs, and delivers sustained value to stakeholders.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Drawing upon feedback received from collectors and insights gleaned from the current website, the proposed functional requirements and non-functional aspects are detailed in Tables 1 and 2. Each requirement is delineated as either mandatory (M), desirable (D), or optional (O).

Table 1

Functional requirement list

Num.	Requirement ID	Requirements Description	Priority
1	SAC1	Register Account	
	SAC1_1	The system will allow users to register for an account by clicking the "Register" button.	M
	SAC1_2	The system should display a create an account form for the user.	M
	SAC1_3	Users should enter the account details, such as username, password, phone number, and email.	M
	SAC1_4	The system should display an error message when the user does not fill in all the details required and prompt the user to re-enter the valid information.	D
	SAC1_5	The user should submit the account information.	M
	SAC1_6	The system should display the login page.	M
2	SAC2	Login Account	
	SAC2_1	The system will allow users to log into an account by clicking the "Login" button.	M
	SAC2_2	The user should enter the username and password.	M
	SAC2_3	The system should display an error message when the user fills in an invalid username and password.	D
	SAC2_4	The user should submit the login form.	M
	SAC2_5	The system should display the homepage.	M
3	SAC3	Manage the Stamp Album	
	SAC3_1	The system should display a stamp album.	M
	SAC3_2	The user can upload the stamp image.	O
	SAC3_3	The system should display an upload form with the stamp name, description, and image.	M
	SAC3_4	The user should input stamp names, stamp descriptions, and upload images.	M
	SAC3_5	The system should display an error message to notify the user to re-enter the valid information when the user does not fill in the required stamp names and upload images.	D
	SAC3_6	The user should submit the upload form.	M
	SAC3_7	The system should display the stamp album interface.	M
	SAC3_8	The user can alter the attached stamp image in the stamp album.	O
	SAC3_9	The user should submit the upload form.	M
	SAC3_10	The system should display the stamp album interface.	M
	SAC3_11	The user can remove a stamp image from the stamp album.	O
	SAC3_12	The system should show the user a confirmation before deleting the image.	M
	SAC3_13	The user will select Yes to delete the image.	O
	SAC3_14	The user will select No not to delete the image.	O

	SAC3_15	The system should display the stamp album interface.	M
4	SAC4	Search Keyword for Collection Stamp	
	SAC4_1	The user can search for the stamp's name in their stamp album.	M
	SAC4_2	The system should display the image after filtering the stamp's keyword.	M
	SAC4_3	The user can search for the stamp's name in other stamp albums.	M
	SAC4_4	The system should display the image after filtering the stamp's keyword.	M
5	SAC5	View Stamp Album	
	SAC5_1	The system should display their stamp album.	M
	SAC5_2	The system should display all of the stamp collectors' albums.	M
	SAC5_3	The user can browse any stamp collector's album.	O
	SAC5_4	The user can click the stamp collection to view the image and the name.	O
6	SAC6	Manage the User Account	
	SAC6_1	The admin can view a list of registered users.	M
	SAC6_2	The admin can search for user information from the user list.	O
7	SAC7	Manage User Information	
	SAC7_1	The user can alter the username, email, and phone number.	O
	SAC7_2	The user can change the password by entering the new password and confirming it.	O
8	SAC8	Manage Forgot Password	
	SAC8_1	The user can change the new password by emailing the OTP once they forget it.	O

Table 2
Non-Functional requirement list

| Num.	Requirement ID	Requirements Description	Priority
1	SAC7	Reliability	
	SAC7_1	The time required to receive the verification OTP is 1 minute.	M
	SAC7_2	24/7 availability of website services.	M
2	SAC8	Usability	
	SAC8_1	Users should be able to register account details within 10 seconds.	M
	SAC8_2	Users should be able to log in or out of the account within 10 seconds.	M

Figure 1 illustrates the use case diagram for the proposed application, outlining the dynamic interactions and communications between various use cases and the actors involved in creating and managing a digital stamp album. The two primary actors identified are the user and the admin. The application offers a range of functionalities for the user, including registering an Account, logging in, managing the Stamp Album, searching for Stamps using Keywords, and viewing the Stamp Album. The Log in Account use case

incorporates advanced features such as password recovery through One-Time Password (OTP) validation and the verification of the username and password for authentication purposes. The Manage the Stamp Album use case extends the user's capabilities by enabling them to upload stamp details, modify existing stamp information, and delete attached stamps as needed. On the admin side, key functionalities involve Registering Accounts, Viewing Stamp Albums, and searching for specific stamps. The prototype undergoes iterative development until it precisely aligns with the specified requirements. At this stage, the final system or product is meticulously crafted. Moreover, the server-side functionality seamlessly integrates into the web-based application using the cPanel web hosting server. Additionally, data storage is facilitated through the Mysql database. Employing these tools ensures the web application's streamlined data storage and administration. Figures 2 to 7 show the selected interfaces of StampAlbumCollect.

Figure 2 shows the landing page, displaying a sample of the stamp collection from the selected collector. To archive their stamp collection in the application, collectors must first register (Figure 3). For ease of use, only basic information is required during registration. Once verified and logged in, users are directed to the interface shown in Figure 4, where they can manage their stamp collections. Users can search (Figure 5) or browse (Figure 6) their existing collections, and they can also add new stamps (Figure 7).
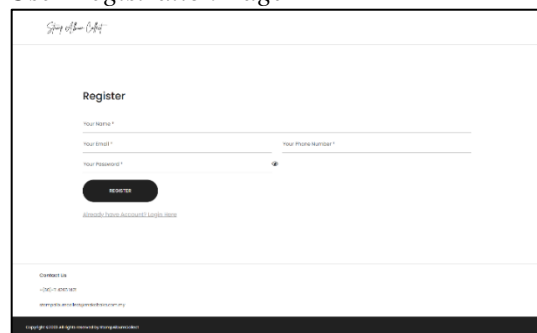
Figure 1
The Use Case
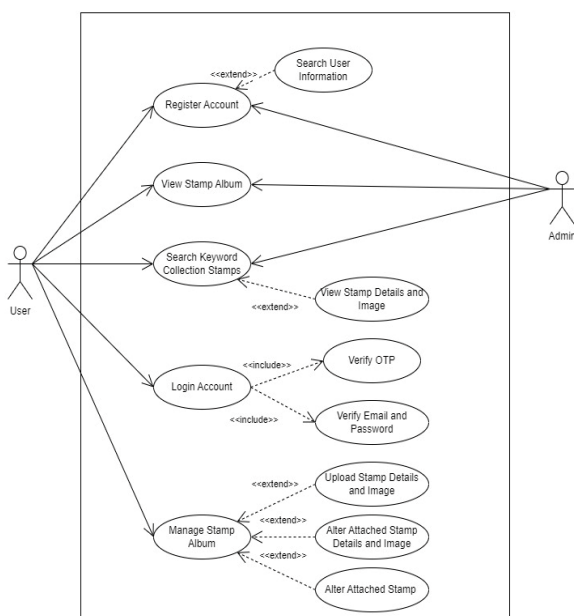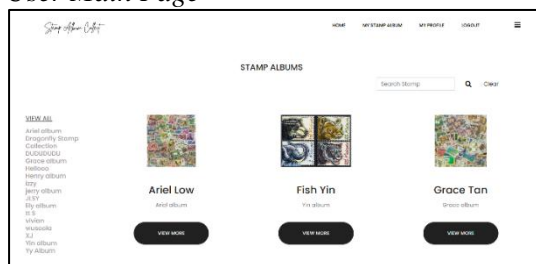

Figure 2
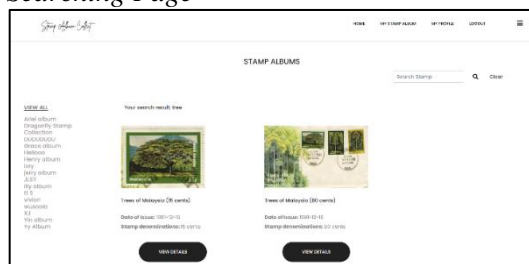*StampAlbumCollect Landing Page*
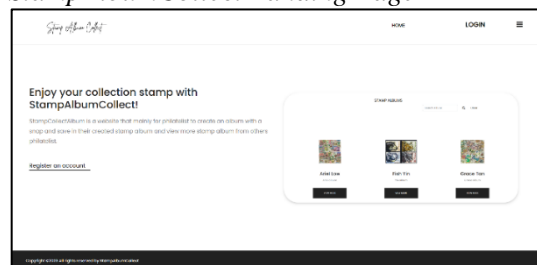
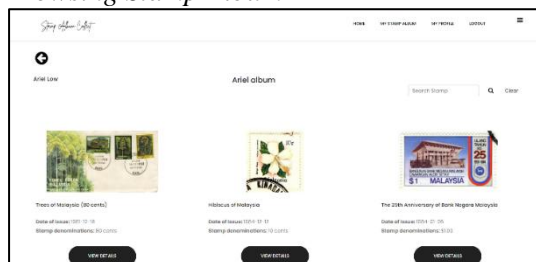**Figure 3**
User Registration Page
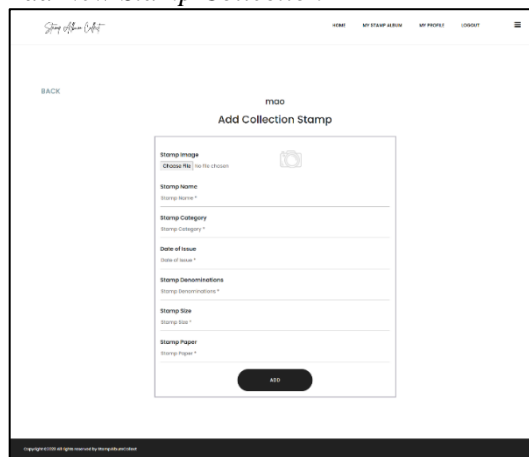
Figure 4
User Main Page

Figure 5
Searching Page

Figure 6
Browsing Stamp Album

Figure 7
Add New Stamp Collection

EVALUATION

The evaluation of StampAlbumCollect aimed to assess its effectiveness in meeting user demands and expectations. The emphasis of the evaluation was placed on users' ability to utilise StampAlbumCollect to accomplish their goals and acquire new knowledge. Additionally, the assessment gauged the satisfaction users experienced with the overall usefulness of the web-based application.

Evaluation Setting

The usability evaluation involved 30 voluntary participants who were randomly selected. Two primary instruments were utilised: StampAlbumCollect and a post-task questionnaire. The questionnaire, divided into Sections A and B, collected demographic information and evaluated the web-based personalised stamp album using a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The evaluation process comprised reading instructions on a Google form, using StampAlbumCollect to follow the experiment procedure, and completing the post-task questionnaire.

Respondents' Demography and Background Information

Analysis of demographic data revealed that among the 30 participants, 23.3% (7 individuals) identified as stamp collectors, while 76.7% (23 respondents) assumed the role of non-stamp collectors. Gender

8

distribution comprised 60% females (18 participants) and 40% males (12 participants). The majority (66.7%) fell within the 21-25 age range, with the following significant group being 26-35 (16.7%). Notably, there were no respondents in the 36-45 age group. Regarding experience with online stamp directories, 80% (24 respondents) claimed no prior exposure, 13.3% (4 respondents) had used such platforms, and 6.7% (2 respondents) were uncertain. In terms of relationships with stamp collectors, 56.7% (17 participants) reported none, 30% (9 respondents) had connections, and 13.3% (4 participants) were uncertain. The majority (73.3%) had not considered digital stamp collecting, while 23.3% (7 respondents) expressed interest, and 3.3% (1 participant) were unsure.

The Usability of Web-Based Personalised Stamp Album

The evaluation of Section B in the post-task questionnaire focused on assessing respondents' perceptions of StampAlbumCollect's practical experience, usefulness, ease of use, ease of learning, and overall satisfaction. The frequency and average ratings, as presented in Tables 3 to 6, revealed predominantly positive evaluations, with most respondents assigning scores of four or five on the usability measures. Notably, no negative ratings (one or two) were recorded, indicating a lack of unfavourable reviews. A few responses fell into the neutral category, suggesting a positive reception of StampAlbumCollect. The Likert scale, initially ranging from one (Strongly Disagree) to five (Strongly Agree), was subsequently reclassified into Disagree (Likert 1 and 2), Neutral (Likert 3), and Agree (Likert 4 and 5) for clarity and ease of interpretation.

In Table 3, respondents provide overwhelmingly positive feedback on the practical experience with the Web-Based Stamp Album. Participants unanimously agree that the overall ease of completing tasks (Q1) and the time taken to complete them (Q2) are excellent, reaching 100%. This implies a unanimous consensus among users that the application is user-friendly, ensuring an efficient and time-effective experience.

Table 4 delves into the perceived usefulness of the Web-Based Stamp Album, and respondents express unanimous agreement across various dimensions. Questions related to effectiveness, productivity improvement, and quick task accomplishment (Q1, Q2, Q3) all receive a 100% agreement. While there are minor percentages of neutrality and disagreement, particularly regarding expectations and time-saving aspects (Q4, Q5), the overall trend emphasises a positive perception of the system's utility.

Respondents overwhelmingly agree on the ease of use and user-friendliness of the Web-Based Stamp Album in Table 3. Questions about the system's simplicity (Q1, Q2) received unanimous agreement, indicating high satisfaction with its intuitive design. Although a small percentage expresses neutrality and disagreement on the required steps and user preferences (Q3, Q4), the overall sentiment underscores a positive user experience.

In Table 5, participants share positive sentiments about the learning experience with the Web-Based Stamp Album. There is unanimous agreement on quick adaptability, ease of remembering how to use the system, and overall ease of learning (Q1, Q2, Q3). Although a small percentage remains neutral, the general feedback suggests a positive user learning curve.

The final table, Table 6, gauges overall satisfaction with the Web-Based Stamp Album. Respondents overwhelmingly express satisfaction with the product (Q1), a willingness to recommend it to others (Q2), and a belief that it works the way they want it to (Q3), all reaching 100%. Despite some expressing neutrality or a lesser degree of satisfaction on certain aspects, most indicate a positive and contented user experience with the Web-Based Stamp Album (Q4, Q5).

Table 3

Practical experience

Questions	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Q1: Overall, ease of completing	0	0	100%
Q2: Overall, the time taken to complete	0	0	100%

Table 4

The usefulness

Questions	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Q1: Helps me be more effective	0	0	100%
Q2: Helps me be more productive	0	0	100%
Q3: Enables me to accomplish tasks quickly	0	0	100%
Q4: Does everything I would expect	0	3.33%	96.67%
Q5: Saves my time	0	6.70%	9.33%
Q6: Gives me more control	0	0	1005
Q7: Meets my needs	0	3.33%	96.67%
Q8: Useful in the overall	0	0	100%

Table 5

The ease of use

Questions	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Q1: Is it easy to use	0	0	100%
Q2: Is it user-friendly	0	0	100%
Q3: Requires fewer steps	0	6.67%	93.33%
Q4: Liked by both occasional and regular users	0	16.67%	83.33%
Q5: Can be used without written instructions	0	0	100%
Q6: Can recover from mistakes quickly	0	6.67%	93.33%
Q7: Does not notice any inconsistencies	0	6.67%	93.33%
Q8: Can be used successfully every time	0	10%	90%

Table 6

The ease of learning

Questions	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Q1: Learned to use quickly	0	3.33%	96.67%
Q2: Can easily remember how to use	0	3.33%	96.67%
Q3: Is it easy to learn	0	6.67%	93.33%
Q4: Quickly became skilful	0	6.67%	93.33%

Table 7

The satisfaction

Questions	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Q1: Satisfied with Web-Based Stamp Album	0	3.33%	96.67%
Q2: Would recommend to a friend	0	10.00%	90%
Q3: Works the way I want it to work	0	0	100%
Q4: Feel the need to have	0	16.67%	83.33%
Q5: Wonderful and pleasant to use	0	0	100%

CONCLUSIONS

StampAlbumCollect represents a significant and transformative leap forward in stamp collecting or philately. Breaking away from its conventional foundations in physical albums and catalogues, stamp collecting has undergone a revitalisation through the integration of ICT. Positioned at the forefront of this digital evolution, StampAlbumCollect introduces a user-friendly and efficient platform for collectors to manage and showcase their stamp collections adeptly. By transcending spatial constraints, StampAlbumCollect provides a seamless experience that is accessible from any location with an internet connection. Moreover, StampAlbumCollect offers educational value, enhances efficiency, promotes environmental sustainability, and fosters a global community of collectors. It also contributes to individual well-being by encouraging creative and recreational pursuits. As stamp collectors embark on their digital journey with these web-based albums, they celebrate the rich history of their hobby and actively contribute to shaping the future of this cherished pastime.

The thorough examination of respondents' feedback yields a comprehensive insight into their perceptions of the Web-Based Stamp Album application. The consistently positive and overwhelmingly agreeable responses regarding practical experience, usability, usefulness, ease of learning, and overall satisfaction collectively indicate a content and positive user experience. The unanimous praise for the application's ease of use, user-friendliness, and effectiveness in completing tasks and facilitating quick learning is particularly noteworthy. The high levels of agreement on the system's usefulness, its alignment with user needs, and overall satisfaction underscore the success of the Web-Based Stamp Album in meeting and even exceeding user expectations. While a few instances of neutrality or lesser agreement on specific aspects exist, the prevailing sentiment is decidedly upbeat, affirming the application's favourable reception and alignment with user preferences. These insights validate the Web-Based Stamp Album's success and offer valuable considerations for potential improvements and future iterations to enhance user satisfaction and overall experience further.

Future enhancements to the web-based stamp album application could offer users enhanced customisation tools, such as additional design options for virtual stamp albums, enabling collectors to personalise their collections' visual presentation further. Moreover, the implementation of advanced data analytics holds the potential to glean valuable insights into user behaviour, preferences, and trends within the stamp-collecting community, guiding future updates based on collectors' actual needs and behaviours. Recognising the widespread use of mobile devices, developing a dedicated mobile application for the Web-Based Stamp Album could significantly improve accessibility and convenience for users, empowering collectors to manage their stamp collections seamlessly on the go.

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