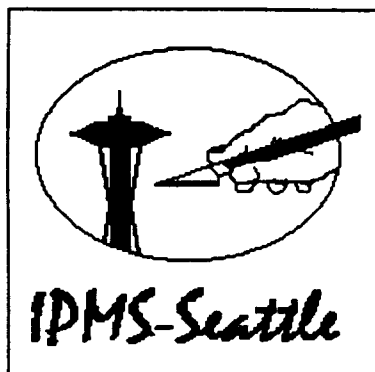




NEWSLETTER

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Modellers Survey Results

First of all, I would like to thank everyone who took the time to complete the survey that was included in the June issue of the Newsletter. Nearly 50% of the membership responded. For a blind mailing, that response rate is quite good. And, as expected, it definitely proved entertaining to see what modellers were really thinking.

The idea for the survey grew out of a series of conversations I have had with other IPMS members since joining the group in 1991. We were wondering if the conventional wisdom — such as “no one builds anything, they just buy kits” or “most people only model aircraft” — was in fact true, or just unsupported assumption. So I decided to go to the source; you’ve seen the resulting questionnaire. I was most interested in determining the rate of model production (both over the long term and recently) and discovering exactly *what* modellers were building.

The following recap is broken down by question, as it appeared on the original survey. Please keep in mind that all analysis is based on the survey responses that were received. They do not necessarily reflect the views of IPMS-Seattle, Modeldom Assembled, or myself. Though they might.

#1: WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY AREA OF INTEREST?

Modellers of obscure fire engines of the 1920s beware: when someone says that IPMS-Seattle is primarily an aircraft club, you’re going to have to agree with them. A whopping 75.8% of respondents listed Aircraft as their primary area of interest. In a surprising (though distant) second place was HO model railroading, with approximately 6.1% of the vote. Rounding out the voting were equal 3% tallies for armor, cars, figures, and space/sci-fi.

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I think many of us have accepted this for some time. The two other modelling areas that are supposed to be popular in the US — cars and railroading — each have their own hobby associations, including the NMRA and our local Puget Sound Auto Modelers. So IPMS has functioned as the group that includes, basically, everything else. And aircraft has always outwardly appeared to be the strongest category, certainly in terms of model contest entries.

I think the danger here is in assuming that since most IPMS modellers do aircraft, aircraft should become the driving force of IPMS. Overconcentration on any area will only drive away modellers of other interest, which doesn’t help any of us. And, as you’ll see when we get to questions of secondary interest, even the aircraft modellers have many other things they are interested in.

#2: FOR YOUR PRIMARY INTEREST, WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED SCALE?

For the aircraft modellers, 1:72 narrowly edged 1:48 by a total of 39% to 33%. 1:32 ran a distant third (with 3%), followed by 1:200 and 1:144.

Again, don’t read too much into the numbers. Most respondents who chose one scale first, chose the other second, and many then chose 1:32 as a third priority. Still, it seems that 1:72 does still hold a minor edge in a tight field. One interesting thing to realize is that not many aircraft modellers feel absolutely tied to one scale (though if they did list one scale only, it tended to be 1:72).

As you could expect, respondents who selected cars as primary interest picked 1:24/25 scale (with secondary interest in 1:43), armor modellers chose 1:35, and railroaders headed for 1:87/HO.

#3: FOR YOUR PRIMARY INTEREST, WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED TIME PERIOD?

In this question, I wasn’t looking for what you were modelling, but which time period you were interested in. The WW2 period, 1940-1945, was a clear favorite, with the highest number of respondents noting that they were interested in the period (81.8%) as well as having the highest weighted level of interest (meaning that many more people listed it as a high priority than a low one).

In second place came the prewar period, 1930-39. I find this very noteworthy, considering that this era has been so roundly ignored by the injection-molded model manufacturers.

Next we get a grouping of eras, without a clear order of priority: 1950-59, 1960-79, 1945-50, and WW1 (1914-19). Even the lowest of this group had 42% of respondents noting some level of interest in the period. The 50s are another era that has been generally passed over by the big kitmakers.

Next comes the interwar period (1919-29), the modern age (1980-current), and, trailing the pack, the early portion of the 20th century (1900-13).

I must admit that finding modern subjects that far down on the list came as a surprise. While a substantial number listed the 1980-current period as being of interest (54.5%), most had it fairly low on their priority list. Only two respondents listed it as their #1 priority area. Is this perhaps a reaction to the never-ending stream of F-4, F-16, F-18, F-15 etc. models we were buried under a few years ago? Was the demand for those types ever as strong as the kitmakers felt it to be? The tilt toward subjects that can be seen on the evening news isn’t just an aircraft phenomenon either — most car kits are of current-year models, and a lot of

DML's armor production are of modern tanks.

This raises a tricky question. Are the kitmakers out of synch with what modellers want, or is IPMS out of synch with what kit purchasers are buying? Do we really make up as much of the kitbuying public as we like to think, or are we a vocal minority fringe group? Since we never see sales figures for kits, we may never know, but it is something to consider.

#4: DO YOU HAVE A SECONDARY SUBJECT AREA OF INTEREST?

75.7% of respondents reported that they did have a secondary interest. 24.3% said they did not.

This ties back to my comments on question #1. Even though the vast majority of IPMS-Seattle modellers do aircraft, almost all of them have another area of solid interest too. Even a notorious airplane loon like me enjoys seeing well made models of cars, armor, and even the occasional HO layout.

#5: WHAT IS YOUR SECONDARY SUBJECT?

Ships led the way with 26.1% of respondents designating them as their secondary subject. Aircraft came next with 21.8%, then cars and figures with 13.1% each, armor with 8.7%, and dioramas and space/sci-fi with 4.3% each. 8.6% were "other" areas (mainly model railroading) not listed above.

So lots of you are closet ship modellers; this may help explain the large number of very nice ship models that perennially show up at the Recon. You can also see that aircraft are the secondary model of choice for a large group. This reinforces the idea that aviation is the main – though not exclusive – driving force for most IPMS modellers.

I was surprised to see figures that high on the list. Though we do usually get a good turnout of figures at the model contests, we rarely see them at our monthly meetings.

#6: FOR YOUR SECONDARY SUBJECT, WHICH SCALE DO YOU PREFER?

Reflecting the large number of ship modellers, 1:700 and 1:350 ran fairly even in the lead. Among aircraft modellers, 1:72 ran ahead of 1:48, though not by a substantial margin. The

general levels of scale preference among car and armor modellers were roughly the same as in the primary scale preference above (i.e., 1:24/25 over 1:43, and 1:35 for tank guys).

I inadvertently made it harder for the figure builders when I put the survey together by not including their size/scale designators. But most noted their preferences on the form anyway. It seems that 90mm figures are the preferred scale, followed by 54mm and 120mm.

No great surprises here. I would note in passing that if aircraft are your secondary interests, you are more likely to be a 1:72 scale fancier than if aircraft are your primary interest. What that means in the great cosmic scheme of things, however, is quite beyond me.

#7: FOR YOUR SECONDARY SUBJECT, WHICH ERA DO YOU PREFER?

Results were roughly the same as with the time period preference for primary subjects, with a few exceptions.

The WW2 period was still the one overwhelmingly favored, with 52.2% of respondents claiming at least some interest, and by far the highest weighted level of priority. Next, the figure painters made themselves known by choosing the nineteenth century. The next selection was late interwar/early WW2 (1930-39), followed by the modern period, 1960-79, 1950-59, 1961-80, WW1, and 1900-13.

No surprise that WW2 scored so high, but it is notable that the current era did better with secondary interests than with primary interests. Perhaps the availability of good kits for modern subjects comes into play here. The new kit is of secondary interest, but it is a new kit after all, so you buy it.

Plus, we again see strong interest in the 1930s. Someone on the manufacturing side is missing the potential boat, if we are indicative of modelling enthusiasts as a whole.

#8: LIST ANY OTHER MODELLING INTERESTS.

This question was designed to be a catch-all to pick up any interests not listed in the previous seven questions. 21% mentioned cars and/or trucks, 18% model railroading (almost all HO),

12.5% ships (1:700 and 1:350), 9% each for figures, dioramas, armor, 6% each for reference books/mags, RC cars/others, space/sci-fi, and, finally, 3% each for others (like Civil War ships, forts, scratchbuilding, 1:144 ships, and subs).

#9: HOW MANY INJECTION-MOLDED MODELS HAVE YOU COMPLETED IN THE LAST 10 YEARS?

OK, here is where we start getting serious. One of the main things I wanted to get out of this survey was a feeling for the actual production rate of the sample group of modellers. You've all heard that nobody really builds anything and that all we're doing is collecting piles of attic insulation. The turnout of models at an average IPMS chapter meeting might go to support this somewhat. But is it true?

Well, no. At least, according to your survey responses, it is not. People are, in fact, building models (though there was one chap would claimed not to have built anything in the last 10 years). For each of the categories concerning production, I'll be listing the MAXIMUM number that was quoted, the MINIMUM number, and an AVERAGE of all answers.

For the number of injection-molded kits built in the last 10 years, the maximum was 400, minimum was 0, and the average was 69.3.

#10: HOW MANY INJECTION-MOLDED MODELS HAVE YOU COMPLETED IN THE LAST YEAR?

OK, so how many were completed recently, i.e. in the last twelve months? The maximum was 64, minimum 0, average of all responses 9.5.

So, it would appear, each average Seattle modeller produces around 10 models a year, or roughly one per month. That brings us to a question that was *not* on the survey: where the heck are they? We have around 50-60 members show up on any given second Saturday, and it is not common for the number of displayed models to exceed 20. And many of those are multiple efforts brought by the same modeller. The inescapable conclusion is that you are in fact building, but most of you steadfastly refuse to bring your work to the meetings. Why? Hold your thoughts for the supplementary questionnaire that will be coming along near yearend.

You can also infer from these two questions that the annual production of completed models has in fact gone up in the last 10 years. That can only be good news in the modelling hobby.

#11: HOW MANY VACUFORM MODELS HAVE YOU COMPLETED IN THE LAST 10 YEARS?

The maximum was 24, minimum 0, average 2.5.

Well, I doubt anyone would expect this to be a high number. Almost no vacuforms make it to the meetings. This is more understandable, since they are admittedly more difficult kits, and the chance of them turning out well is correspondingly less. But still, it appears many of you are in fact building some. Conventional wisdom would have you believe that while Americans do occasionally buy vacuforms, only the British actually sit down and build the things. According to our survey, that is not true, but I can't say there is much visual evidence.

#12: HOW MANY VACUFORM MODELS HAVE YOU COMPLETED IN THE LAST YEAR?

The maximum was 2, minimum 0, average .2.

Again, a relatively small number. If you are interested in unusual and obscure types, you don't have much choice than to consider vacuforms. But it does seem that most people are sticking to injection-molded kits.

#13: HOW MANY RESIN MODELS HAVE YOU COMPLETED IN THE LAST 10 YEARS?

The maximum was 14, minimum 0, average 1.3.

Again, not a high number, but no one would have expected it to be. But now compare the vacuform numbers to the resin numbers.

#14: HOW MANY RESIN MODELS HAVE YOU COMPLETED IN THE LAST YEAR?

The maximum was 5, minimum 0, average .4.

Notice that the average of vacuform kits over the last 10 years was 2.5 to resin's 1.3. But then note that the average of vac kits over the *last year* was .2 to resin's .4. It would appear that the

popularity of resin kits is increasing. Of course, resin has only truly come into its own in the last few years. With the better availability of Czechmasters Resins and a subtle shift in the cottage industry away from vacuforms and into resin kits, this trend will probably continue. It certainly can be argued that resin kits are easier to build than vacuforms.

#15: HOW MANY CONVERSIONS HAVE YOU COMPLETED IN THE LAST 10 YEARS?

The maximum was 200, minimum 0, average 14.

All I was really interested in here was finding out how willing the average modeller was to go beyond the kit provided in the box. I never specified how the kit was to be modified (aftermarket conversion kit or scratchbuilt), and it doesn't really matter. As a group, we are certainly doing more conversions than building vacs or resins, but it is still only a relatively small part of our modelling. Does this mean that kitmakers are providing us with the variants we want, or that we're too lazy to do the extra work needed to complete a conversion?

#16: HOW MANY CONVERSIONS HAVE YOU COMPLETED IN THE LAST YEAR?

The maximum was 20, minimum 0, and average 1.6.

Again, the pace has quickened a bit in the last year over the historic average. I think this is indicative that a portion of modellers in general are willing to try new things at times, possibly due to all the aftermarket parts and accessories that have become available in the last few years.

#17: HOW MANY KITS DO YOU OWN THAT HAVE NOT BEEN COMPLETED?

Yikes! The question that made sure all respondents would keep the questionnaire out of sight of their wives and accountants! Are we the packrats that everyone thinks we are?

A resounding "yes" here, gentlemen. The maximum was (ulp) 4000, minimum 1 (which is perhaps even more amazing), and average 482.

If you tie this back into the model production figures above, you will find

that we, as a group, have almost 50 times as many kits in our collections as we make in a single year. And that doesn't even take our buying patterns into account; we'll get to that in a minute.

#18: HOW MANY BOOKS ARE IN YOUR REFERENCE LIBRARY?

OK, so maybe the kit gathering was a fluke. We only have enough books to support our planned projects, right?

The maximum was 1225, minimum 0, average 294. It appears that we still have almost 30 times the number of books than we complete models in a given year. Actually, given that gathering books and reference material is something of an end in itself, and not just a research tool for the building of models, this number probably isn't out of line. When it's too late to fire up the airbrush, you can still sit in front of the fire with a good book.

#19: HOW MANY MAGAZINES ARE IN YOUR REFERENCE LIBRARY?

The maximum was 6000, minimum 0, and average 702.

I admit this to being one of my particular addictions, but even I am nowhere close to the chap with 6000 magazines! Mags represent passive entertainment (and cheap — at least relative to books). Plus they tend to have lots of pictures, which is essential for a visual medium like modelling.

#20: HOW MANY KITS, BOOKS, DECALS, AND MAGAZINES DO YOU BUY EACH MONTH?

The minimum number of items bought for all four categories was 0. For kits: maximum 6, average 2.6/month. For books: maximum 12, average 2. For decals: maximum 4, average 1. For magazines: maximum 10, average 3.8.

So let's extrapolate this out a bit. On the average, respondents buy 31.2 kits, 24 books, 12 sets of decals, and 45.6 magazines per year. No wonder we don't build many kits — we're spending too much time at the store!

So what does the questionnaire say about the general buying habits of IPMS-Seattle members? That we already own an average of 482 kits, that we buy another 31 kits every year, but that we only complete 10 models each year. Even if we stopped buying any

more kits (yeah, right) we still couldn't finish all of our existing kits at our present rate of production before we head for the big Discount Hobby Center in the Sky. Just out of curiosity, does this surprise *anyone*?

#21: WHICH SINGLE KIT DO YOU OWN THE MOST COPIES OF (COMPLETED OR NOT)?

To be honest, I didn't expect any single type to emerge as a clear winner, and none did. Four people designated P-51s (though in different scales and kits), and two each mentioned F-4s and Spitfires. But beyond that, the kits mentioned were all over the block. Most were aircraft (though there was some armor and even a fire truck), and scales for the a/c were roughly split between 1:72 and 1:48. Most seemed to come from the 1935-45 time period. But nothing besides possibly the P-51s could be considered a dominant type.

#22: WHO DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE OVERALL BEST KITMAKER?

I certainly didn't expect this to be as one-sided as it turned out to be. Hasegawa demolished the competition with 53.9% of the vote. In a distant second was DML with 10.3%, followed by Tamiya and Monogram with 7.6%, Fujimi and Historex with 5.2%, and Verlinden and Huma with 2.6%.

#23: WHO DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE OVERALL WORST KITMAKER?

This one was rather less clear. Lindberg did emerge as the victor (if you would be inclined to call it that) with 17.6% of the vote. Hobbycraft, Merlin and Mach 2 came in second with 8.3%. From there the voting really spread out. Idea, recent Russian kits, Aoshima, Aurora, and Testors (probably the reissued Hawk and Aurora kits) all got 5.5%. Bringing up the rear were Pegasus, Huma, Pioneer, Tamiya, Airfix, KPL, Formaplane, Revell, and Blue Max with a marginal 2.7% each.

We can draw a couple of inferences from this list. IPMS modellers don't much care for reissues of elderly kits from the dawn of plastic modelling (especially when they are not noted as such, as in the case with repackaged Testors kits). Limited run kits also took their lumps, given that we are paying premium prices (e.g., Mach 2 kits). Hobbycraft has the dubious distinction

of being one of the only ones producing current, injected kits to get high marks in this area.

#24: WHICH KITMAKER DO YOU FEEL GIVES BEST VALUE FOR MONEY?

Monogram dominated this category, with 29.7% of the vote. Minicraft came in second with 18.9%. Hobbycraft snuck in here too with 10.8%. Revell and Hasegawa had 8.1%, Fujimi, AMT and Italeri had 5.4%, and DML, Airfix, and Accurate Miniatures all received a token 2.7%.

It's interesting to note that Monogram and Minicraft are both US-based companies, and don't have to pay the duties that foreign outfits do. Presumably that would explain why they are considerably cheaper than their overseas competition.

#25: WHICH KITMAKER DO YOU FEEL HAS MOST IMPROVED SINCE 1990?

All I was looking for here was to see who you perceived as an improving player in the game. Hobbycraft came in first in a sluggish field, with 36.3% of the vote. Minicraft was next with 27.2%. From there the tally scattered, with Huma receiving 9%, and the group of Tamiya, Monogram, Hasegawa, MPM, Lindberg, and Pegasus all getting 4.5%.

#26: WHO DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE BEST VACUFORM KITMAKER?

Rareplanes came in first with 26.3% of the tally. Koster Aero was next with 15.7%. The group of MPM, Eagles Talon, and Esoteric each had 10.5%. Finally, Cooper, Formaplane, Falcon, Blue Rider, and Eduard all came in with 5.2%.

I guess if anyone ever doubted the influence of Gordon Stevens on the development of vacuform modelling over the years, this should put them straight. He was one of the first, and is still one of the best. Keep in mind that Rareplanes (now no longer owned by Stevens) hasn't really released a new kit since the Mariner and Coronado a few years back. If you want new Stevens kits, consider the series of BoxKites being marketed by Maintrack Hobbies in the UK.

Personally, though it is not my scale, I thought that Koster Aero would take this

category. From what I have seen of their kits, the detail is very nice.

#27: WHO DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE BEST RESIN KITMAKER?

The Czechmasters kits (a generic name for almost anything made out of resin that comes from Czechoslovakia, many of which are marketed by Washington's own Aviation Usk) emerged as the winner in a slow group, with 27.2% of the vote. Verlinden came in second with 18.1%. The rest of the field (HiTech, Atelier Noix, Toy Craft Berg, Cooper, JMGT, and Replica) each had 9%.

#28: WHO DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE BEST SHORT-RUN INJECTED KITMAKER?

Huma clearly emerged as the victor in this one, with 41.1% of the votes cast. MPM came next with 23.5%. A group of stragglers (Pegasus, Pioneer, Ventura, Aviation Usk, PK, and TLD) all limped in with 5.9%.

They're not cheap and they do have the — well, *limitations* of limited run kits, but I have to concur that Huma is doing a fine job on their product, especially if you like obscure German subjects. MPM shows a lot of promise; it will be interesting to see if they actually come through on their very ambitious projected release schedule.

#29: WHICH KITMAKER DOES THE BEST SURFACE DETAILING, INSTRUCTIONS, DECALS, AND PACKAGING?

Although many kitmakers were listed in each of the four categories, I will only mention the top two or three vote-getters in each.

Hasegawa was the clear victor in the surface detailing category, with 53.3% of the votes cast. Fujimi came in second with 13.3%, and Tamiya was third with 10%.

For instructions, Hasegawa still carried the day, with 34.6%. Tamiya was second with 15.3%.

For decals, Hasegawa was in complete command, with 44% of the votes. Tamiya came next with 12%.

Finally, Hasegawa completed its sweep by winning the box art category (though many of you pointed out that you had little interest in this aspect) with a full 50% of the vote. DML was next with

26.9% (so you like all those paintings of Allied bombers going down in flames behind late Luftwaffe nightfighters, eh?)

These four categories make it clear why Hasegawa ran away with the overall best kitmaker prize. It is nice to see them being recognized for getting all the pieces correct as well. Now, if only they would get interested in 1950s RAF.....

#30: WHICH BOOK PUBLISHER DO YOU FEEL IS BEST SERVING THE NEEDS OF MODELLERS?

No question here. Squadron-Signal pulled 40% of the vote. Aerofax, Kalmbach and Schiffer were next with 10%, while the group of Four Ways West, Bonanza, Naval Institute Press, Experten, Osprey, and TAB/Detail & Scale all received 5%.

Squadron has obviously found the right combination of photos, colour, and line drawings in their *In Action* series.

#31: NAME A RECENT BOOK THAT YOU FEEL WAS EXCELLENT.

Another category that I wasn't really expecting a clear consensus in, and there certainly was none. Only a couple of books got more than one vote, the most notable being the Monogram USN/USMC Colour and Marking series. I agree that this is a fine series, if somewhat expensive. Wouldn't it be nice to see a trade paperback version?

#32: WHO DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE BEST OVERALL DECAL MAKER?

Aeromaster and SuperScale ran in a dead heat in this category, both bringing in 25.9% of the vote. Modeldecals was next with 18.5%. Scalemaster and Hasegawa kit decals received 7.4%, while MSAP, Almark, Experten, and Americal-Gryphon each got 3.7

I have to admit that this was one category that surprised me. I certainly expected Aeromaster to do well, but SuperScale? There is probably no other manufacturer that takes such vocal abuse as they do. And I have to admit that their instructions are notable for lack of detail. Is it just because they are widely available, not too expensive, and mostly feature American subjects? It would appear that the naysayers don't represent the larger body of hobbyists.

The RAF zombie in me was gratified to see Modeldecals fairly high on the list.

Dick Ward is one of the true artists in our hobby, and each decal set is essentially a mini-monograph on the chosen topic. Every aspect of his work is superb: research (mostly, I gather, from personal experience), drawing, printing, instructions. If you've never bought one of his sheets, do so and see how markings should be done.

#33: WHO DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE WORST OVERALL DECAL MAKER?

When I posed this question, I actually meant aftermarket decal makers only, but many included bad kit decals in here as well. Monogram/Revell kit decals and Hobbycraft decals took first place with 21.1%. Airfix kit decals and SuperScale came in second with 15.7%. Next were Eastern European kit decals and ESCI (I presume this meant their standalone line of markings) with 10.5%. Finally, Repli-Scale got 5.3%.

#34: WHICH DECAL MAKER DO YOU FEEL HAS IMPROVED MOST SINCE 1990?

40% of the vote went to Aeromaster, with 10% each to Scalemaster, Propagteam, Aviation Usk, Hasegawa, Tauro, and SuperScale.

Aeromaster certainly has to be considered a powerful force in aftermarket decals, with their aggressive release schedule, nice choice of colourful markings, and high quality instructions. And the price, at least in the US, is very competitive. Hopefully they won't get so tied up in their new ventures (detail parts, importing other maker's resin parts, and their new paint line) that they neglect the decals. And if only they could catch up on the 1:72 releases.

#35: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MODELLING MAGAZINE?

Another blowout. Fine Scale Modeler received 57.1% of the votes cast, while Scale Aircraft Modelling got 17.8%. A group of others (Scale Models Intl, Scale Auto Enthusiast, Narrow Gauge Gazette, Model Railroader, Scale Modeler, Windsock, and Model Airplane News) each got 3.5%.

Of all the results from the questionnaire, I think this one surprised me the most. I personally have never cared for the Kalmbach style, which seems to resolutely aim for the lowest common denominator and the entry-level

modellers. FSM is a perfect example of that; in aggressively trying to cover every sort of modelling, they lose all focus. There are so few articles in any given FSM that relate to a particular area of modelling, I find myself reading the ads, and that's about it. Can this be part of the SuperScale phenomenon mentioned earlier: the product isn't great, but it's the only one available in every store in the country? But somebody out there apparently likes it. Perhaps we, as a group, are just willing to read about all sorts of modelling, rather than just our own particular interests.

#36: WHAT OTHER MAGAZINES DO YOU THINK DESERVE HONORABLE MENTION?

This one was all over the place too. No less than 26 different mags received a mention, and less than half got more than one vote. Even the ones that received the most votes (Military Model Preview and Scale Auto Enthusiast) only picked up 10.6% of the total vote. Obviously, no clear consensus.

#37: NAME FAMILIES OF KITS YOU THINK SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY KITMAKERS.

Y'know, I was afraid I was asking for it by putting in two questions about which kits you wanted to see produced by the majors. But I was hoping to get lucky, and stumble across some obvious trends. No such luck. Requests were widely scattered, from Italian fighters to 1:72 hydroplanes.

The vast majority of requests were for aircraft. Meteors in 1:48 seemed to be popular, as did Japanese twin-engine WW2 bombers and A3 Skywarriors. I did notice that most choices seemed to come from the pre-1940 periods, perhaps reflecting that a lot of types from WW2 and after had already been done adequately. Many were types that had simply not been done before in injected form (like 1:72 airliners, light aircraft, flying wings and Lockheed single engine transports). Others were requests for state-of-the-art versions of older models (like T-6, B-57/Canberra and Skyraiders). For cars, there was a lot of interest in Formula One and Indy Racers, while ship requests seemed to come from pre-WW2 time periods, mainly US Battleships.

#38: NAME KITS YOU THINK SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY KITMAKERS.

And if you think the "families" question was confused, you should see the responses to this one. Over 200 individual types were listed in aircraft alone. At best, I can give you some generalizations about what many modellers seem to be asking for.

In 1:48 scale, the majority of requests were for prop-driven aircraft that have already been done in 1:72. There were some jets (like the Skywarrior, B-57, F1H Phantom) but most seemed to come from the WW2 and prewar eras. Choices were roughly divided between German and American subjects; not much British or small-nation types. The Catalina was mentioned most often, perhaps because of the recent Monogram announcement that a PBY is due in 1994/95.

In 1:72 scale, things were a bit more out on the fringe. This could be expected, since so many more kits have been done in this scale. The two main themes seemed to be big kits and pre-WW2 choices. There were multiple calls for a Tu-95, C-141, Ju-290, C-124, C-5, KC-97, and Tu-16. Transport aircraft have been widely ignored by kitmakers, so they make up a large portion of unkitted subjects still out there. There was a large number of interwar types on the list, many of which were civil or commercial. Multiple requests went for Lockheed Orion, Curtiss Shrike series, Boeing 314 Clipper. One of my personal favorite unkitted aircraft, the XB-70 Valkyrie, was on the list (am I the only one who noticed that the large amount of plastic used in Testors' SR-75 kit would have been just about right to produce a nice Valkyrie?) Also, WW1 aircraft, especially lesser-known types, got many requests. Japanese fighters and recon types seemed popular as well.

It would be difficult to generalize about the vehicle entries; very few choices were repeated. The cars tended to be from the 1960s and the armor was almost all pre-WW2.

The bottom line is that no clear consensus emerged about the Great Unkitted Model Type. Maybe there simply isn't one to be found; our interests, even as a group, are just too diverse. This could hardly provide comfort to the kitmaker trying to figure out what the next big seller is going to be. Still, I think it might behoove the

manufacturers to consider larger types, along with more prewar models — at least for the enthusiast sector.

#39: WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE MODELLING'S GREATEST STRENGTH?

All right, now it's time for the essay questions. Many of you entered multiple answers for each of the next three questions, so I've tried to boil it down into a smaller group of generic answers.

The most commonly mentioned strength of our hobby was the sheer amount of product out there (17.9%). Having lots of choices — and having the choice between many very nice kits — keeps us all happy. 12.8% noted that the last few years has seen a definite increase in kit choices, with more types not previously done in model form. 10.2% mentioned the increasing quality of model kits, the opportunity to immerse oneself in the history of a subject, or the satisfying feeling in creating a miniature piece of art.

Others cited the strength of modelling clubs and associations, the fact that modelling is cheap entertainment, the good cottage industry support, the ability to proceed at your own pace, the fun and stress-relieving aspects of modelling, and the increase in new companies joining the modelling industry.

#40: WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE MODELLING'S GREATEST WEAKNESS?

Absolutely no contest here. Fully 45.7% of you mentioned the high cost of modelling. Most of those made a point of saying how difficult it makes it on younger modellers trying to break into the hobby. The second highest total, 14.2%, specifically mentioned the lack of younger people entering the hobby at all. Our own club demographics (as well as the numbers for this survey, which we'll get to in a moment) bear this out. It could be that modelling is a mature market in more ways than one!

Another block of answers (11.4%) cited the competition for time with interests other than modelling. Having two kids definitely makes me sympathetic to that one. Another group (8.5%) chided the EPA for getting involved in modelling (paints, solvents, etc). Then came an avalanche of other reasons — manufacturers going out of business,

modellers getting too serious and losing sight of the fun in the hobby, an over-concentration on military subjects, lack of promotion from manufacturers, the overconcentration and duplication within a limited range of types and the lack of pre-WW2 subjects.

Valid weaknesses, all. But the cost issue, that certainly dominated your answers, has to be recognized by the kitmakers before they price themselves out of whatever market will be left for their services.

#41: WHY DO YOU THINK SO MANY MODELLERS BUY MORE KITS THAN THEY CAN EVER POSSIBLY BUILD?

A deeply philosophical question, if there ever was one! We've already established that modellers are losing ground on their collections of unbuilt kits each and every month. And yet we still go out and drop money on still more attic insulation all the time.

The largest reason selected (by 27.1%) was purely pragmatic: if the kit is not bought now, it may become unavailable or more expensive in the near future. This is not untrue: just take a look at a mail-order catalog from a few years back and you'll see how many oddball items are no longer included. Even the major manufacturers have kits that have dropped out of the retail stores. They can be found, but it will take time and work, and you may have to pay collector's prices.

Next, at 14.5%, came the problem of the desire to build a given kit outdistancing available time, with the modeller not really being realistic about the time it will take to do. And then, everything behind that model in the queue is delayed, so the backlog grows. This ties back to the comments in the previous section about the competition with other interests for the shrinking pool of available time.

Another bloc (11.1%) cited the satisfying feeling of possessing a kit, especially a new kit, and the excitement that goes with it. Yeah, I have to 'fess up to that one, too. It's always fun to paw over a kit the first time, and retailers are known for frowning on customers opening up kits they may or may not buy. Plus, with so much oddball stuff available only via mail-order, sometimes the only way you can really give a new

kit or accessory a thorough study is to actually buy it.

Next came a reason that I agree fully with. When you're looking at a kit in the box, it is the best thing you've ever done. No seams, flawless paint, crystal clear canopy, meticulous attention to detail. It's only when you actually build the thing that you bollocks it up royally. Many modellers would rather live with the fantasy than build the model and face what they perceive (rightly or wrongly) as their own inadequacies.

Quite a few other reasons were mentioned. The flow of nice new decals tends to make one buy kits to set aside for the markings. It is admittedly difficult to focus on one kit with so many other good ones coming out these days. Then there is the collector's bug: gotta complete the set, 'cause I want to do a lineup of every type used. Some noted a compulsive addiction to buying, hoarding, and generally being a packrat. There is always the attraction to packaging and box art. Another reason is the difficulty of passing up a good price when it is available. And of course, it is very nice to have things at hand if you get the impulse to build a particular model.

The final three reasons struck me as intensely philosophical. The first: buying is easy, building is hard. The second: stupidity, overconfidence, and acquisitive tendencies (yowch!) And finally, as a summation: for the same reason Emelda Marcos used to buy shoes.

#42 - 46: DEMOGRAPHICS (AGE, EMPLOYMENT, INCOME, AND CLUB AFFILIATION).

Now that we've registered all of your opinions on various modelling subjects, what do we know about the sample group of subjects?

AGE	
16/under	1
17-25	0
26-35	2
36-45	10
46-55	4
56-65	5
65/over	4

I think there is a general feeling that IPMS-Seattle is mostly retired Boeing workers. But as you can see, the main bulge is in the 36-45 range. To be

honest, I have no explanation, though I do notice the almost total lack of younger members. If this is generally true of modelling as a whole, there are still a few years left until our numbers start declining due to age, but there aren't many kids coming up to replace us.

A lot of modellers my age (and I fit into the bottom of the 36-45 bulge, just barely) returned to modelling because they had pleasant memories of making models as a kid. What if the kids of today don't have those wistful memories to fall back on? Why should we expect them to drift into modelling as adults? Thirty years from now, they may get misty-eyed over an old Nintendo game.

As for employment, there weren't any deep trends; "Technical" was the category most often chosen, but the definition may not be the same for all people. There were also a large number of retired people, engineers, and others (which ranged from geologists to students).

The question about which sector your employer is in was a bit more defined. A large group listed "aerospace" (i.e., I wonder which company that could be), and only a few less listed "transportation". A sizable number were retired (as noted above), and in manufacturing or services. In fact, only "data" and "research" had no entries at all.

I know that some of you got a bit testy at my inclusion of household income information. For demographic purposes, I wanted a snapshot of which income brackets we fall into as a group (plus I now know who to hit up for lunch money at the next meeting). Anyone who did not want to put that data down just left the area blank.

The average household income, based on the data I did get, was \$55,238. The point is that modellers tend to be upper middle class white males. Maybe we can apply for minority status with the Feds....

Club affiliation was interesting also. Just about everyone who responded to the questionnaire was an IPMS-Seattle member, but many belong to other modelling clubs. Five were listed as belonging to other Region 7 clubs, 2 in IPMS chapters outside of Region 7, 4 in

IPMS-USA (I suspect there were more, but the question was badly phrased to pick this up), 9 in other modelling clubs, and one not a member in any club.

→ → → → →

So there you have it. *IPMS-Seattle Confidential*, a true expose on the seamy habits of Seattle's best scale modellers. Did it reveal any great cosmic truths? Maybe not. Was it fun? I hope so. It did stimulate a lot of conversation and personal introspection. Do I think all modellers hold the same views as the sample group? Nope.

Many issues came up after the questionnaire began to circulate, so there will be another mini-survey in December. Again, thanks to all who participated!

Kevin Callahan

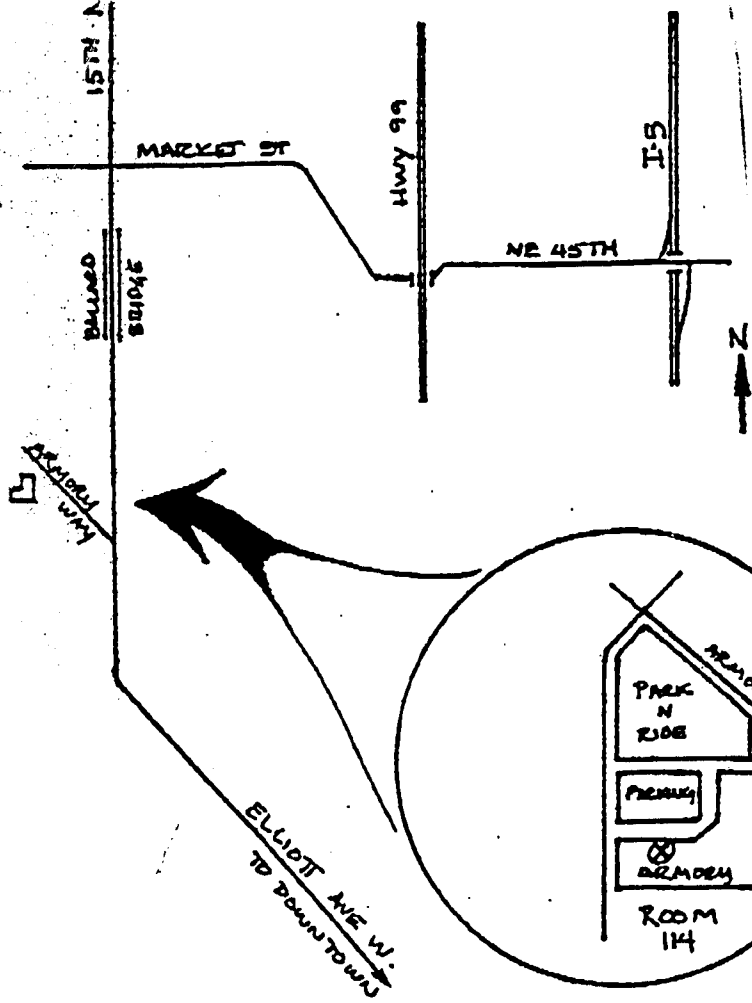
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Another reminder that Aviation Usk is holding a combination aircraft model contest and chili feed on Saturday, October 8. Entry price is \$1.00 per model, with chili included. The event will be held at the Usk Community Hall in Usk, Washington (north of Spokane) from 1.00pm to 7.00pm. Tom asks that you RSVP at (509) 445-1236.

I should apologize for the type font I had to use in this issue. Normally I use Arial 10 pt type, which gives good readability while still allowing a lot of information to appear in each issue. However, the writeup on the survey just ran out of my control, forcing me to go to a slightly smaller type font for this issue only. So don't adjust your bifocals; this was a one-time experience, and next month we'll be back to our usual format.

IPMS-SPRING SHOW

ANNOUNCEMENT: Those of you who were at the September meeting know that the date of the IPMS-Seattle Spring Show has been changed to Saturday, March 11. This is two weeks earlier than the date we had been considering. We have made the change in order to accomodate the IPMS-Whidbey show scheduled for mid-April. Hopefully the weather will cooperate; flyers will be available at the October meeting for distribution to area hobby shops.



NEXT MEETING!!

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8 at 10.00am

NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY
Room 114
1601 W. Armory Way
Seattle, WA

From north- or southbound I-5, take the NE 45th st exit. Drive west on 45th under Highway 99 (Aurora Ave) to Market Street. Continue west on Market St to 15th Ave NW. Turn left and drive south on 15th Ave NW across the Ballard Bridge to Armory Way. Watch for signs!

If you are coming from south Seattle, take Highway 99 onto the Alaska Way viaduct to Western Ave. Follow Western north to Elliott. Continue north on Elliott to Armory Way. Watch for signs! There is plenty of parking in the Metro Park and Ride lot.



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B-24s hit Ploesti refineries, August 1943

NEXT MEETING: Saturday, October 8 at 10.00am
See the above map for meeting location.

William Holowchuk
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Snohomish, WA 98290