

Their format renders maps, atlases and cards vulnerable to general wear and tear and loss and damage. As content and presentation dated they would then be discarded in favour of newly published material. In the course of time a considerably higher proportion of pocket atlases has been lost and destroyed, as compared with the much greater survival rate of costly folio volumes sitting safely on their library shelves. There is a good market for pocket atlases so that breaking may be the fate reserved for some imperfect copies only.

Rarity is obviously affected by the number of original impressions and it is because of this that some later maps are much more difficult to find than those printed one or two centuries earlier. The term 'rare' itself can mean anything and tends to be overused. Collectors will be lucky to acquire any miniatures that really are rare and some patience will be needed to find those referred to as scarce or uncommon.



Jean Desmarests, Paris, 1698

The above map is a rarity which appeared on the title-card of *Le Jeu de géographie*. This was a set of playing cards which was also published as a little book. Designed by Jean Desmarests and engraved by Stefano della Bella of Florence, it was issued several times from 1644, when it was published by Henry le Gras: *A Paris, Chez Henry le Gras, Libraire au 3e. pilier de la grande salle du Palais*. This imprint was cut off the bottom of the title in the final issue by Nicolas le Clerc in 1698.

Age, colour, condition, popularity, rarity and quality of impression and paper, may all affect value. World maps are popular with all nationalities, which tends to make them the most expensive and some countries, or areas of countries, are more popular than others. The new collector should be aware that prices can vary and dealers of vast experience can sometimes find them puzzling too. The bottom line is that though there may be typical prices, a map is worth whatever someone is prepared to pay.

There is a lot of pleasure involved in various aspects of collecting, including sometimes finding what is sought after. Some series that used to be fairly easy to acquire have become much less so, but there are still many charming, interesting and unusual miniatures for collectors to find at quite reasonable prices.

With regard to what to buy, the experts usually advise adopting some sort of theme for a collection, which can entail a fruitless search for rarities and the purchase of less desirable items, solely for completeness. It may well be that the best approach is to use one's own judgement in just acquiring whatever is the most appealing to the individual and in the constant quest for the elusive item, never neglecting to enjoy what one already has.

