

Collector to Appraiser

Transforming a hobby into a new profession

By Susan Golashovsky, ASA

Have you ever wondered if you could turn your hobby into a career? If you have a hobby you are passionate about – be it history, antiques, decorating or the arts – you may have wondered how you might be able to spend more time with your hobby and less time at work. Or maybe you are one of those lucky people whose hobby is actually an adjunct to your job – but you have not taken steps to monetize the hobby into a part of your business so you can do both at the same time.

Many people, when choosing a career, do not consider their interests. Perhaps this is because they define a hobby as something outside of their regular occupation. However, if you take a moment to consider that this rule is easily broken, and a combination of skill and interest might be a compelling reason to pursue a different or expanded career path, you might find yourself with an option for taking the steps necessary to actually begin on a new career path.

"Who is going to hire someone who loves to study the decorative and/or fine arts?" you may ask yourself. That is the question I asked myself when I was a real estate professional and my hobby was antiques. I began my career in the decorative arts as a part-time antiques dealer. And then I moved the business into full time by going into an antiques co-op where I did not have to be present. I did my buying on weekends, evenings and during vacations. It was a passion – I did not mind the hours. And when I finally decided to segue into a new career, I looked to appraising. After several years as an appraiser, I left the retail end of the antiques business and have turned my full concentration to the business of appraising antiques and decorative arts. I find it enormously satisfying, an eternal learning experience and a lot of fun. Being able to earn a good living doing something I am passionate about is a dream come true.

So I know from experience, it is possible to change careers and/or turn a hobby into a career. But you do have to get some formal training. I learned that just appraising objects without having the grounding in appraisal theory and methodology was not something I felt comfortable with, and began to seek out education.

Enter the [American Society of Appraisers](#). ASA is a world-renowned and respected international organization devoted to the appraisal profession. As the oldest and only major appraisal organization representing all appraisal specialists, ASA is devoted to providing the highest possible standards in all areas of ethics, professionalism, education and designation criteria. The Society has allowed me to grow as an appraiser and has given me many opportunities and outlets – from program development to speaking engagements, teaching assignments, appraisal assignments and peer contacts. And ASA has grown along with me to the point where they now offer not only the full [Appraisal Studies Program](#), but also an [Appraisal Summer Camp](#), which is a boot camp for fast-tracking one's education – perfect for those looking to actually make a career move, expand a current career by monetizing knowledge, or just get a feel for appraising to see if a career move is the right one for them. Another way to look at Appraisal education is purely for the sake of knowledge and understanding of the profession. This can be most important if you are an attorney or a trust officer who wants or needs to better understand the world of appraising to ensure that the needs of their clients are being met.

The 5th Annual Summer Appraisal Camp at Purchase College, State University of New York, takes place June 3-19, 2016. This accelerated summer program enables you to **earn your [Purchase College Appraisal Studies Certificate](#) in just over two weeks!** You may take courses individually (provided that prerequisites have been met) or earn a certificate by completing all requirements. Upon completion of the program you will have taken the first step toward (a) becoming an appraiser or working as an appraisal expert in a gallery, auction house, or insurance company, and (b) qualifying for eventual accreditation and membership in the ASA. All required courses are taught by accredited senior appraisers of the American Society of Appraisers.

Sometimes, all you need for success is the right connection, the right education and a choice of educational opportunities. For me, it was the Appraisal Studies programs offered by the American Society of Appraisers. Now may be the time to see if this is a perfect opportunity for you. Learn more about becoming a personal property appraiser by visiting [ASA Online](#) or calling (800) 272-8258.

—Susan Golashovsky, ASA, is an independent Personal Property appraiser in Pennsylvania, who holds Accredited Senior Appraiser designations from ASA in multiple specialties. Susan completed her appraisal studies through ASA at George Washington University and earned a connoisseurship certificate from the Winterthur in American Material culture. She entered the appraisal profession through a retail background, having sold antiques and decorative arts for 20 years through shows as well as brick-and mortar shops throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey. She has developed connoisseurship courses in Antique Furniture, Silver, Residential Contents, Ceramics and Objects of Art for the Personal Property Committee of ASA for presentation during seminars for those wishing to accredit or gain a specialty designation. Her appraisal practice specializes in antiques, decorative arts and folk art, with clients in the corporate, governmental, institutional and private sectors. Susan, a long-time, active member of the American Society of Appraisers, currently holds the position of Vice President, Board of Governors, and is past chair of the society's Ethics Committee.