The Order of Things

In a live auction setting, having a trailer (or two) or a quantity of small items before moving into the major items serves many purposes, such as: warming up the auction team, warming up the crowd, and giving those buyers who may be running late, a chance to make it to the sale before missing out on any major items.

However, in an online-only auction, what purpose, if any, do small items before major items serve in catalog order? In my own opinion, I prefer to have several small items of reasonable value and with good visual properties at the start of the catalog to be the first items to close in case bidders are new to that process and to act as a time cushion should there be any issues.

However, I feel it is advantageous to quickly move into the major items, so they are displayed at least half way down the first page. This not only gives them better exposure, but helps set the tone for the rest of the sale. I, for one, have scrolled through many online auctions and by page ten or so, I am tired of looking and move on, potentially missing some interesting lots at the end.

As an auctioneer I feel it is my job to promote each item but especially the major pieces - whether it be a farm auction or business liquidation. As a buyer, if I have to look through several pages of parts and small items before viewing the major items in a sale, I already have the idea in my head that this sale must just be primarily junk or small items and possibly negatively affect how I will feel or bid on the major items.

I understand the view that having the small items (even if it is several pages in a catalog before the major pieces) will get more eyes on those lots and potentially increase interest, that perhaps people interested in the more valuable items would not page past them and miss out on a number of the small lots. I think that viewpoint is valid; however, I feel most people will still scroll to the end of the catalog out of curiosity and will possibly feel more positive about a box of wrenches after looking at a well-cared-for combine, truck, or other item. As auctioneers we put the best pictures of the most valuable items on our sale bills and advertising - why not do the same with auction catalog order?

I would love to hear what everyone’s thoughts are and look forward to visiting with you at the upcoming summer picnic! Have a great and hopefully dry and warm spring.